

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated November 4, 2005. Claims 77 and 78 are now pending in the application, of which Claim 77 is the only independent claim. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 66, 68 and 70 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,521 (Shiota). Without conceding the correctness of the rejections, they are believed to be obviated by the cancellation of Claims 66, 68 and 70. Nonetheless, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections, and Applicants submit that newly-added Claims 77 and 78 are believed to be allowable for at least the following reasons.

The present invention of Claim 77 relates to a center server that executes a print instruction for a print order between a client computer and a print server installed in a print shop. According to the invention, the center server stores various tables that associate various print shops with a group, the group with a service, the service with a template, the template with an item, and the item with a price. The table with the price is updated if the price of the item changes. Then, when a print order that designates a print shop and a service is received, a price for the print order is acquired by referring to the tables, and a print charges are calculated based on the acquired price, whereby a user at the client computer is notified of the print charges.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 77 is directed to a center server apparatus for executing a print instruction based on a print order from a client computer to a print server apparatus installed in a print shop, comprising first storing

means for storing a first table associating print shops with a group, second storing means for storing a second table associating the group with a service, third storing means for storing a third table associating the service with a template, fourth storing means for storing a fourth table associating the template with an item, fifth storing means for storing a fifth table associating the item with a price, updating means for updating the fifth table stored by the fifth storing means if the price is changed, receiving means for receiving the print order from the client computer via a network, wherein the print order includes a designation of a print shop and a service, acquisition means for acquiring a price for the print order by referring to the first to fifth tables on the basis of the designation of the print shop and the service included in the print order, calculation means for calculating print charges on the basis of the acquired price, and notification means for notifying the calculated print charges to the client computer.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of the present invention. In particular, the applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of center server having a first table associating print shops with a group, a second table associating the group with a service, a third table associating the service with a template, a fourth table associating the template with an item, receiving a print order from the client computer, wherein the print order includes a designation of a print shop and a service, acquiring a price for the print order by referring to the first to fifth tables on the basis of the designation of the print shop and the service included in the print order, calculating print charges on the basis of the acquired price, and notifying the calculated print charges to the client computer.

Shiota merely discloses a service in which a center server selects and assigns a laboratory for printing a picture in response to an order from a customer so that the printing process can be carried out by the laboratory specified by the customer. When the center server transmits the order information to the selected laboratory, it records the content of the order and calculates a data storage fee, a communication charge and the like to be paid to each laboratory by periodically summing up the amount of data transferred.

The Office Action contends that Shiota's disclosure of the claimed first and second tables is obvious because otherwise, how would Shiota be able calculate the price or know which providers provided services. However, Applicants fail to see anything which corresponds to the claimed invention, and in particular, fail to see any disclosure in Shiota of the claimed first to fifth tables, much less a chain-type linking between the variables included in the tables. In this regard, one advantage of the present invention is storing the fifth table with an item associated with a price such that, if the price is changed, the fifth table is updated, and then when the print charges are to be calculated based on the designated print shop and service, the latest information can be obtained, and the most appropriate print shop for executing the print order, along with the appropriate price, can be obtained and notified to the client computer.

Accordingly, Claims 77 and 78 are believed to be allowable.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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